

JOHN A. HOPPER—HEIRS OF.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 363.]

MARCH 19, 1860.

Mr. HOLMAN, from the Committee on Revolutionary Claims, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee on Revolutionary Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Rachel Yelverton, and other children and heirs of Captain John A. Hopper, late of New Jersey, deceased, report:*

That they have carefully examined the evidence accompanying said petition, and find the following facts established beyond reasonable doubt:

That during the winter of 1779-'80 Major Boyles, with a large detachment of the continental troops, were quartered at Hoppertown, in the county of Bergen, New Jersey, occupying as a garrison, among other buildings, the dwelling-house and storehouse of Captain John A. Hopper, which were also used as a depot for arms, ammunition, and provisions for the American army. The evidence further establishes a fact which but confirms the history of the times, that, while Major Boyle and his troops were still quartered at Hoppertown, on the morning of the 16th of April, 1780, they were surprised by a body of British light-horse, from Staten Island; and, after a bloody engagement, in which Major Boyles was mortally wounded, and a brother of Captain Hopper and others were slain, and many others, among whom was John Hopper, the father of Captain John A. Hopper, were wounded, the American forces, by reason of the superior number of the enemy, were compelled to abandon their defences, and the British, with the barbarity which characterized their occasional victories during the revolutionary war, fired the dwelling-house and storehouse of Captain Hopper, which had been occupied during the engagement by the American troops. The buildings were entirely consumed, and with them perished not only the military stores of the American forces, but the entire personal effects of Captain Hopper—furniture, some continental money, and the wearing apparel of his wife and children, leaving him and his family absolutely destitute.

That the property was destroyed in consequence of its being in the possession of the American troops is clearly established by a number

of witnesses, whose testimony does not seem open to any reasonable suspicion. The only property destroyed being that of Captain Hopper and of his father, John Hopper, which was occupied by the same forces. Both Captain Hopper and his father had rendered themselves obnoxious to the British by their unwavering devotion to the fortunes of their country.

Naturally a diversity of opinion exists among the witnesses as to the value of the property. That the personal property was of large value is manifest from the evidence; but your committee, acting on what seems to be the settled policy of the government, have only considered the value of the buildings destroyed, which they find to have been at least two thousand dollars.

Captain John A. Hopper was one of the most gallant soldiers of that period which is distinguished in the annals of the world for patriotic devotion and illustrious achievements. As a captain of militia he was the terror of the enemy, and, during the long struggle of the revolution, he never once faltered in devotion to his country. In the same noble spirit in which he stood by his country in the hour of her peril, he refused, while asserting the justice of his claim, to apply for its liquidation during the years of her embarrassment. And now his widowed daughter asks, as an act of justice, that the debt due to the father shall be paid. For near a quarter of a century this claim has been pending for the consideration of Congress; and your committee, satisfied of its justice, and that no part of it has been paid, and that the application comes within the precedents which Congress, in obedience to the demands of a grateful people, have established, cannot fail to suggest that if the facts hereinbefore recited are true, as your committee have found, the honor as well as the justice of the country demands a prompt adjustment of the claim.

Your committee, considering only the claim for the destruction of the buildings, differ with former committees who have investigated the subject as to the amount which should be allowed, former reports mentioning a much larger sum than your committee have found due. But, following in the footsteps of precedent, and subjecting the testimony to a severe analysis, your committee have found the actual value of the buildings destroyed to be the sum before mentioned; and, in deference to the rule of Congress, the justice of which is not strikingly apparent, have not added even the interest accrued since the presentation of the claim, and, in conformity with their conclusion, report the accompanying bill.